

REMARKS

I. Status of Application

Claims 1-28 are all the claims pending in the Application. Claims 1-3, 15-19 and 21 have been rejected.

The present Response addresses each point of objection and rejection raised by the Examiner. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

II. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 4-14, 20 and 22-28 would be allowed if rewritten in independent form. However, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner hold in abeyance such rewriting until the Examiner has had an opportunity to reconsider (and withdraw) the prior art rejection of the other claims.

III. Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102

A. Sawayama

Claims 1-3, 15-17 and 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,048,071 to Sawayama (hereinafter "Sawayama"). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections for *at least* the independent reasons set forth below.

According to the MPEP, "a claim is anticipated only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described, in a single prior art reference." (MPEP § 2131). Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-3, 15-17 and 19 positively recite limitations which are not disclosed (or suggested) by Sawayama.

First, the grounds of rejection fail to identify any portion of Sawayama that discloses or suggests the feature of “a backlight unit” as recited in claim 1. Here, the grounds of rejection have completely ignored the recitation of “a backlight unit,” since Figure 1 of Sawayama, which is relied upon by the grounds of rejection, discloses quite the opposite of a backlight unit—a front-light illumination device 20. (Column 12, lines 7-13; Figure 1). Moreover, Sawayama cannot possibly suggest the feature of “a backlight unit,” as recited in claim 1, since Sawayama expressly discloses that reflection-type LCD’s, like that shown in Figure 1, are provided with a reflective plate on the back of the liquid crystal cell and that, therefore, such reflection-type LCD’s cannot use a backlight. (Column 1, lines 49-51).

Second, the grounds of rejection fail to identify any portion of Sawayama that discloses or suggests the feature of “a point light source,” as recited in claim 1. The grounds of rejection allege that the light source 26, as disclosed in Sawayama, corresponds to “a point light source,” as recited in claim 1. However, Sawayama explicitly discloses that the light source 26 is not a point light source. In fact, Sawayama discloses just the opposite—that “[t]he light source 26 is a linear light source such as a fluorescent tube” (emphasis added). (Column 12, lines 13-15).

Finally, Sawayama fails to disclose or suggest the feature of wherein the refraction member is shaped to refract the light emitted from the point light source toward an optical axis of the point light source in order to reduce an azimuth angle of light that is incident upon the LGP, as recited in claim 1. The grounds of rejection allege that the prism sheet 81 corresponds to “a refraction member,” as recited in claim 1.

In contrast to the requirements of claim 1, however, Sawayama merely discloses that a prism sheet 81 and a diffusion plate 82 collectively serve as a light-control means for limiting the spread of light entering the light-entry surface 25 from the light source 26. (Column 12, lines 25-28). However, Sawayama provides no disclosure or suggestion whatsoever that the prism sheet 81 refracts light toward an optical axis of the light source 26. Rather, Sawayama merely discloses that, collectively, the prism sheet 81 and the diffusion plate 82, limit the spread of light entering the light-entry surface 25. Limiting the spread of light from the light source 26 is fundamentally different than refracting light toward an optical axis of the light source 26, as required by claim 1. What is more, in order for the Examiner to maintain a rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102, the identical invention must be shown in Sawayama in as complete detail as contained in the claim. (Richardson v. Suzuki Motor Co., 868 F.2d 1226, 1236, 9 USPQ2d 1913, 1920 (Fed. Cir. 1989); MPEP § 2131).

Additionally, Sawayama does not inherently disclose the feature of wherein the refraction member is shaped to refract the light emitted from the point light source toward an optical axis of the point light source in order to reduce an azimuth angle of light that is incident upon the LGP, as recited in claim 1. Indeed, the mere fact that the prism sheet 81 disclosed in Sawayama may limit the spread of light entering the light-entry surface 25, by refracting the light emitted from the light source 26 toward an optical axis of the point light source 26, is insufficient to establish that Sawayama inherently discloses this feature. (MPEP § 2112 stating “[t]he fact that a certain result or characteristic may occur or be present in the prior art is not sufficient to establish the inherency of that result or characteristic).

To the contrary, “[i]n relying upon the theory of inherency, the examiner must provide a basis in fact and/or technical reasoning to reasonably support the determination that the allegedly inherent characteristic necessarily flows from the teachings of the applied prior art.” (MPEP § 2112). Since, the prism sheet 81 disclosed in Sawayama does not necessarily limit the spread of light entering the light-entry surface 25 by refracting light toward an optical axis of the light source 26, Sawayama does not inherently disclose or suggest this feature.

As such, Applicants submit that independent claim 1 is not anticipated by (i.e. is not readable on) the applied Sawayama reference for *at least* these independent reasons. Further, Applicants submit that the dependent claims 2-3, 15-17 and 19 are allowable at least by virtue of their dependency on claim 1.

B. Taniguchi

Claim 21 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,700,634 to Taniguchi et al. (hereinafter “Taniguchi”). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections for *at least* the independent reasons set forth below.

Claim 21 positively recites limitations which are not disclosed (or suggested) by Taniguchi. In particular, the grounds of rejection allege that each of the light-directivity diffusion elements 8, as disclosed in Taniguchi, correspond to “a refraction member,” as recited in claim 21. However, the grounds of rejection fail for *at least* two fundamental reasons.

First, claim 21 requires that “a refraction member is formed in the LGP” (emphasis added). However, Taniguchi fails to disclose or suggest that the light-directivity diffusion elements 8 are formed in the light guide plate 2. To the contrary, Taniguchi discloses that the

light-directivity diffusion elements 8 are formed on the upper surface and/or on the lower surface of the light guide plate 2. (Column 4, lines 30-35; lines 44-47). Therefore, since Taniguchi discloses that the light-directivity diffusion elements 8 are formed on the light guide plate 2, Taniguchi does not disclose, and is incapable of suggesting, that the light-directivity diffusion elements 8 are formed in a LGP, as recited in claim 21.

Second, the grounds of rejection have failed to identify any specific aspect of Taniguchi that discloses or suggests that the light-directivity diffusion elements 8 are shaped to refract the light emitted from a point light source toward an optical axis of the point light source, as recited in claim 21. Indeed, Taniguchi provides no disclosure or suggestion whatsoever regarding this feature.

In contrast to the recitations of claim 21, Taniguchi discloses that the light-directivity diffusion elements 8 do just that—diffuse light. That is, Taniguchi discloses that the light-directivity diffusion elements 8 diffuse or spread out the light incident from the light source 1, away from the optical axis of the light source 1, so as to reduce the dark spots on the display device. More particularly, Taniguchi discloses that the light-directivity diffusion elements 8 make the light from the light source 1 directional along the light guide plate surface. (Column 4, lines 54-56). Further, Taniguchi discloses that the light-directivity diffusion elements 8 array multiple light sections in parallel along the optical axis of the light from the light source, as shown, for example, by the cone-shaped light sections in Figure 17. (Column 4, lines 56-58; Figure 17).

Therefore, Taniguchi fails to disclose or suggest that the light-directivity diffusion elements 8 are shaped to refract the light emitted from a point light source toward an optical axis of the point light source, as recited in claim 21. To the contrary, Taniguchi discloses just the opposite—that the light-directivity diffusion elements 8 diffuse light away from the optical axis of the light source 1. Accordingly, Applicants submit that independent claim 21 is not anticipated by (i.e. is not readable on) the applied Sawayama reference for *at least* these independent reasons.

IV. Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claim 18 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sawayama in view of applicants' admitted prior art. Applicants submit that claim 18 incorporates all the novel and non-obvious features of its base claim 1 and that, therefore, claim 18 is patentable over Sawayama, applicants' admitted prior art, and any combination thereof, *at least* by virtue of its dependency.

V. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Response under 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
U.S. Serial No. 10/700,050

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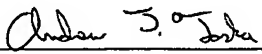
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